

School Safety Program to Become Part of DEMA and new Deputy Director announced

(Smyrna) – This morning Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) Secretary Robert Coupe and Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) Director A.J. Schall made two exciting announcements. First, the Comprehensive School Safety Program (CSSP) will be joining the DEMA organization. The CSSP is a team established after legislation was passed to enhance public safety in all of Delaware's public schools. The law ensures that there are comprehensive and site-specific safety and emergency preparedness plans for each district and school within that district. The act enables a cohesive and coordinated approach between responders and education professionals. Director Schall welcomes Director Evelyn Brown and Deputy Willie Patrick to the DEMA organization and is excited about enhancing this partnership to better serve the schools and districts.

The second announcement was the naming of a new Deputy Director. In November, after 20 years of service to the State of Delaware, Deputy Director Glenn Gillespie retired. Today, Secretary Coupe and Director Schall are pleased to announce Christopher Murtha as the new Deputy. Deputy Director Murtha has more than 30 years of experience in the public safety field. He began his service as a volunteer firefighter in Gloucester County, New Jersey and is a Veteran of the United States Air Force. He served on the Wilmington Fire Department for over 20 years, working in the Operations division and as a Staff Officer. He responded to many serious incidents during his career, including a major high rise fire on Market Street, a trench rescue in Odessa, and a burning downtown apartment building with several people trapped, for which he received a unit citation. He retired with the rank of

captain in 2015. After retiring from the Wilmington Fire Department, he worked as a Fire Protection Specialist for the City of Newark for six months before leaving in November of 2015 to accept a position as a Trainer/Educator with DEMA. He was promoted to Planning Supervisor in November of 2016 and currently manages the Terrorism Preparedness Section. He has an Associates Degree in Applied Science in Emergency Services Management from Delaware Technical and Community College, a Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Science with a minor in Emergency Management from the University of Maryland University College, and a Master of Science degree in Public Safety Management from Saint Joseph's University. He holds numerous public safety certifications and has attended training courses at the Emergency Management Institute, the Center for Domestic Preparedness, and the National Hurricane Center. Chris lives in New Castle County where he continues to serve his community as a member of the Claymont Fire Company.